Some more Alberta Yarns, tonight - Hope you enjoy
em: Here's No. I.

In the early 1880's in southern Alberta there was a mysterious character named " Violin Bill". An extract from an old-timer's diary in the Pincher Creek district reads:

" April 29, took Violin Bill in to Pincher Creek with a broken leg. He's a funny old gink, but he sure can olay. He never let on who he was....." and the old timer told the story.

We were settin' around the stove at the Cow Camp on Dry Fork one evenin'. Although April had commenced she had come in with a nasty blizzary, and the cold was more of a January Edmonton Chinook than any spring zephyr. The boss was just discussin' the weather and everything in particular, when we suddenly all stopped talkin', for above the call of the wind we could hear the most blood-curdlin' calls or cries it was possible to hear.

" They reminded me more of a dying bob-cat, or a lynx that had fouled a trap, but they sounded about a dozen times more uncanny, The Boss jumped to his feet, put on his mackinaw. " Come on, " he said, " let's go see who's disturbin' our provacy. We all went for the simple fact that the noises had got our goat, and we had no wish to be left alone in the shack.

" Following in the path of the sound we came across an old gentleman sitting on the prairie with a violin in his hands. The old fellow was half frozen, and besides, his left leg was dangling below the knee. We picked him up and carried him back to the shack as gentle as we could, and we made him comfortable in one of the bunks.

" After cutting off the old gent's pants leg, the boss made a couple of good splints, and fixed up the leg as comfortably as possible. We then gave the old gent some tea with a stick in it, tha we always kept for an emergency. After drinking this the old man

made a sign to us that he wanted some paper and a pencil. We thought the cold and shock he had suffered had made him dumb, or crazy. When he got the writing material he wrote the following strange yarn.:

"' I came from the east to visit an old friend of mine who I thought leaved on a ranch across the river about nine miles from here, When I got to Pincher creek by coach I left my baggage with the exception of my violin, which is a very valuable possession. Hiring a horse I commenced to ride to the ranch. During the blizzard I must have lost the trail and my horse stuck his foot into a badger hole, throwing me violently to the ground, breaking my leg. This prevented me from standing up and the horse wandered away.

" ' Night was coming on and I knew if I did not do something, I stood a good chance of freezing to death. I saw a large butte some distance away and commenced crawling to it as I thought I could see from the top of it if there was a shack anywhere. It was very painful dragging the broken leg after me but eventually I got there and was glad to see the lights of your shack. I could not crawl any further. I took out my violin and started to draw the bow across the strings, making as much noise as possible.

" ' Luckily the wind being in the right direction, you heard me. Hence, here I am.'

" ' Why didn't you holler?" asked Cap. Once more the old fellow wrote. 'You see, I have been dumb ever since I met with an accident some twenty-five years ago at a fire in an eastern theatre, also the reason I think so much of my violin and always carry it because it belonged to my father who lost his life in that fire.' The old fellow wrote again: ' Now that I am feeling a lot more comfortable, if you boys like, I'll play a little to you.'

"Since those days I have heard lots of music in some of the largest music halls and auditoriums in America andplayed by some of the leading musicians, but I've never heard anything so beautiful as the melody that that old gent played for us, a bunch of rough cowboys in that little shack on Dry Fork.

"The old gentleman stayed with us for several days and than Cap drove him in to Pincher Creek. Never once did he offer to state who he was or where he had come from and we didn't ask him. About three or four months after, one of the boys was reading an Eastern paper that had been sent to him and saw an article telling how a noted professor of music had composed a masterpiece during a forced vacation with some cowboys near Pincher Creek.

"At Christmas, Cap comes from town with the usual Xmas goodies and with a twinkle in his eyes he says, 'Here's a great surprise, lads, at least I think it is by the labels on it. He hands us a large box and we soon had it open. It contained six bottles of brandy and six bottles of good rye and on a card was written, 'With best wishes and kind remembrances from - 'Violin Bill'"